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ABSTRACT

Project PROVE (Parolees and Probationers Realize Opportunities via Education) provides adult literacy and General Educational Development (GED) test preparation for paroled offenders in Louisville, Kentucky. Released offenders are either required or encouraged to attend the program by their parole officers. Interviews with 12 program participants, age ranging from 20 to 39--selected so that half of the group was male and half female, half white and half black--were conducted to assess the program and provide input for recommendations for improvement for the second project year. Program participants were generally positive about the teachers, the opportunities to acquire the GED, and their increased self-esteem and ability to think about the future. They, along with their teachers and the project director, noted that they often lead chaotic lives, going from crisis to crisis, which prevented them from getting the full benefit from the program. Recommendations for strengthening the program included that: (1) attendance be mandatory; (2) judges, correctional officers, and "significant others" of participants be included in receptions and kept aware of participant progress; (3) child care be provided; (4) locations and access be considered; (5) more materials be provided, especially consumables for lower-reading students; (6) a clinical psychologist be hired to help participants solve their immediate problems and make lasting life changes; and (7) a vocational training component be added. (KC)

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PROJECT PROVE: RESEARCH REPORT

BY

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PROJECT PROVE: A CASE STUDY

The qualitative component of the research with the PROVE PROJECT was conducted over a period of several weeks and consisted of observations, interviews with participants and staff, and artifact analysis. The respondents were selected with diversity in mind: age, ranging from 20 to 39; race, involving 6 African Americans and 6 whites; gender, involving 6 females and 6 males; length of time in the program, ranging from 3 weeks to 18 months; and level of placement in the program, 4 Reading students, 6 GED students, and 2 GED graduates who are working in the program as peer tutors. Other differences which impact upon the respondents' success in the program soon became apparent, marital status, employment status, health--both physical and mental, and family history. Differences aside, the commonality which integrates this group is the fact that each has been arrested for a felony, and all have been assigned to this project by probation and parole officers, the outcome goal being the acquisition of a GED. Being here in the PROVE PROJECT is not <u>just</u> a result of their incarceration or parole, however. These respondents have experienced educational deprivation, coupled with physical and emotional deprivation for most of their lives, multi-faceted problems which have intergenerational effects and which helped to lead them ultimately into a problematic life style. Beyond the awarding of the GED, then, the program's success also will be measured in terms of life-style changes.

FACTORS WHICH IMPACT UPON THE SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM AND THE SUCCESS OF THE STUDENTS

A. FACULTY AND STAFF

If programs such as this are to be successful, the staff must first of all understand the values, value systems and standards of behavior and being among the participants. The motives and fears that drive their lives tend to differ markedly from those of the instructors in the program. Even so, there is a rapport here among the staff and students. The respondents mentioned repeatedly that they are treated with respect and dignity. "We are all the same here. It doesn't seem to make a difference what we've done or who we are" are common statements from the respondents. A sense of humor, a sense of honesty, and a sense of honor are important traits for teachers in this program, and according to all reports, these characteristics dominate the interaction between instructors and students.

"This is not what I expected," says Geneveve. "Attitudes here are different than those in high school. I felt isolated there by free lunches, no shoes, and no clothes. Teachers made me feel like I didn't matter--what I said didn't count. But I don't look at it like that anymore. When I first came, it was really hard for me to open that door and walk in. But then I got into the hallway, and I felt different. I feel good about being here. I can open up and say things, and what I say does matter."

Jesse also says that more people listen to him here than

anywhere else. "I can talk with them about my problems," he says, "not just school stuff."

Ken says that life has been a constant struggle for him. Raised by a grandmother who lived in an isolated, run-down shack, he always felt different. "Being poor," he says, "has caused me lots of problems. It does things to your mind. I always felt that I was slow, and the teachers in high school didn't seem to care if you didn't understand. They just went right on and left me behind. If I had teachers here like those I had in high school, those that acted like they didn't want to teach me, I wouldn't be here. I don't care what the guy [probation and parole officer] said--I wouldn't come. I may be slow, but it doesn't mean I don't want to learn."

Wendy says she felt so ashamed when she first entered the program that she wouldn't talk with anyone or share her feelings. "I had real hang-ups about school," she says, "but it's different now because the teachers care about us and make us feel accepted."

Carol went to school in worn out shoes and old clothes that were handed down or drawn from the bins in the Goodwill Store. "I was really embarrassed," she says "by not having anything, by a mother who was addicted to drugs and a father who was an alcoholic. I thought I was stupid, and when I first came here, I wanted to run out of the room like I ran out of high school. I couldn't relate to the teachers there. Here I can. And because of that, I have a feeling that I can do this."

Both Karen and Peggy say that having teachers who take time to explain things and who take time to be friends have made a difference to them. Rex says it helps to have teachers who give attention to everyone, not just the best students. "They take time to see that we are on track," he says. Medger says the "nice people here work with me. I didn't think I could do this, but they act like they want to take time out--to be with me--to help me. They proved me wrong. I can do this."

Why, then, when these students feel this positive about the instructors here, are they so lax about coming? The average daily attendance is only 50%, and students often miss several days in a row.

Cindy, the project coordinator, lists as one of the greatest difficulties in teaching the participants as "Getting them to attend steadily."

B. ATTENDANCE

There is no question that better attendance is needed to ensure the success of this program, but factors other than motivation enter into the picture. The high rate of absenteeism is affected and controlled by the crisis situations in the lives of the students, and these crises can range from lack of transportation to illness to trauma.

Students are given TARC tickets to commute on the bus, and most say they could not come to the program without the free transportation. Ostensibly, transportation should not

be a problem or an excuse for not attending. "But, Cindy says, "it's a long way to Talbert for some of these students." And others, like Carol, have to walk 6-7 blocks to a bus line. This does create a problem for her because an early childhood illness resulted in a tracheotomy and recurring throat problems, which plague her during cold weather. "If I get out in the cold or rain," she says, "my throat hurts so much I can't talk. It makes me have to stay home."

An abusive ex-husband is just as significant a factor. During the course of this study, he beat their 16-year-old son, which hospitalized him and created trauma in the lives of Carol and her other children. She missed school for several days, and when she did come, she could not concentrate on her studies. "It is just better if I stay home on those days," she says. Violence commensurate with drug and alcohol abuse did not end with her divorce, and chaos rules her life. She is attempting to change her environment to provide a more stable existence for her children by moving away from the inner city.

While this move will provide many positives, the negative element is that Carol cannot get to school on time because she must take her son to school first. This adds at least an hour to her commute. On days when she's feeling down, it seems easier not to go to school at all if she is going to be late.

Ken and Medger are more governed by emotional and mental

illness than by trauma, factors which impact heavily upon their attendance. Ken has attended only 32% of the time, "but, he says, "I can't sleep because of chronic insomnia, and it's almost impossible to come on days when I haven't slept all night. I don't want to miss--it's just that sometimes I can't come." Even though Medger is a manic/depressive and heavily medicated, he has attended 70% of the sessions. His parole officer told Medger that if he did not come to school, he would have to report to the parole office each day. School is the better alternative for him. Still, when he is there, he is often "groggy," to use his description, and he isn't sure he gets much accomplished. "It is better to leave when that happens," he thinks.

Others, like Rex, work evenings and night shifts. He says it takes him awhile "to come down" after work, and often it is 2 or 3 in the morning before he closes his eyes. "It's real hard to get out in the morning in that case," he says. Peggy agrees that trying to work and keep up with school at the same time create problems. "I am only one person, trying to keep a house, take care of children, go to school, and report at 3:30 in the afternoon at White Castle."

Some, like Jesse, wish they had jobs to consider. He says that trying to find work has caused him to miss school. "The probation officer told me I had to get a job," Jesse says, "but I don't see how I can do it all. Everything conflicts."

Retention is closely aligned with attendance. Those who

do not form the habit of attending, are usually the first to drop out of the program. Jacqui says that the "paucity of students" is the biggest problem that the program has encountered.

Attendance-specific Recommendations

1. Cindy mentions that there is "no carrot" to offer. This population places little value on intrinsic rewards. Even though they mention often that they feel better about themselves for having attended, this "glow" does not seem to affect the average daily attendance or the retention of the majority. Therefore, it seems that extrinsic rewards should be offered. All of the students lack money, clothing, and amenities, and it seems likely that the awarding of weekly and monthly incentives would provide a small "carrot." We recommend that a selected representative of the program contact stores such as the following for donations of clothing, certificates, and other commodities: K-Mart, Toys-R-US, Tenz the Limit, McDonalds, Pay Less, Carnival, Walmart, Value City, Dollar General Store, Krogers.

The local Bar Association should also be asked to contribute to the incentives aspect of PROVE. Standards for receiving these rewards must be high and must be made clear to the students early in the program. It would probably help to let the students have some in-put about how and when to award incentives.

2. Each of the teachers mentioned the fact that the parole and probation officers are not consistent in their "orders or recommendations" to the students about attendance. The three students who said their officers were adamant about attendance have the highest rate of attendance. While all of these men admitted resentment at first, they each said they now see the value of consistency and continuity (not their words) and "would attend regularly, even if the order were removed." The reception for the officers last year was a good start. Now, the program director should show others the statistics and the outcome of steady attendance and insist upon consistent referrals and orders. Cindy also mentions the need for support of the judges. They should be included in any subsequent reception and should be sent copies of the PROVE reports.

3. The students who are most regular in attendance are those who have the support of a "significant other" in their lives. Several students mentioned that mothers or boyfriends or even children encouraged them to come every day. Wendy says her mother calls her every day to see if she went to school. Linda says her son wants her to complete her GED so she can work in his school. Geneveve tells a similar story. Her children encourage her to get up and get out on time. One has a brother, another a sister who are the major providers of support. We suggest a reception at the beginning of the program for the students and a "significant other," who will be charged in a formal way (similar to a baptism) to lend

support, understanding, and encouragement to the student.

4. Some of the students mentioned that their attendance would be more regular if the program started later in the day. Problems associated with working late shifts, taking children to school, medication, etc. could be alleviated by a later beginning time. If the program were scheduled from 10:00 to 2:00, with lunch served via contract vendors, students might consider that an incentive for coming, as well. A letter from the JC Corrections Center will enable the program coordinator to move forward on this. To keep the students on the premises during lunch, the program should provide enrichment activities, such as voter registration, movies, and workshops that are informational, educational, or inspirational in nature.

5. Students tend to drag in, repeating their pattern for meeting deadlines of all sorts. The program should start on time, with designated activities that require continuity. Dedicating "independent study" as the first activity of the day encourages them to come in whenever they see fit.

C. ATTITUDES

The attitudes of these students toward this program and school in general are affected by multiple factors, including family background; a history of educational deprivation; hostility and resentment associated with earlier educational

experiences as well as with the "order" to attend this program; anger and pain associated with the trauma in their lives; a lack of money and material possessions; and particularly, pressure associated with the conflicts in their lives.

All of these respondents said that they "have to do too many things." Many are attending JDAC, 7 Counties Services, KSAP, or seeing individual counselors. Some see the program as interfering with these requirements, but others believe that one supports the other. They also have financial obligations, and having to be present here affects their ability to look for or maintain employment.

Nonetheless, all of these students report a change in their attitudes since the program began. Linda says she lost her fear of failure and acquired "more gumption--doing more for myself--trying for what I want and what I need. My willpower has improved, and I now know what it is to finish a project." She had no positive role model early in her life, so negative influences dominated her behavior. Since completing her GED and becoming a peer tutor, though, she views herself as "different, in control, and headed for a bright future."

Carol's self-confidence has improved greatly, too. When she first came into the program, she says she "felt very stupid, incapable of learning." She now believes that she can finish what she's started and get even more education. She feels comfortable in the classroom and has accomplished

more than she ever thought she could. She credits the "comfort zone" with her preliminary successes.

When Carter was first assessed, he marked the test without thinking, he says. "I just went eeny, meeny, miney, moe. I didn't want to be here, so I just marked it up." Because his scores were low, Carter was placed in the reading component of the program. But the teachers were too smart for him. They saw more in him than he saw in himself. He was retested and placed in the GED component. "It's different for me now," he says. "I have changed my way of believing. I want more than I have, and if I stay with this, I can get it." His feelings about himself have changed as much as his feeling about the program. "I didn't care much about myself before. I had very low self-esteem. But since I'm learning more, I feel good about myself. I have left my old friends and have the confidence to look for new friends." Carter has been released by his probation officer from the obligation to attend, but he is coming now "knowing that no one is forcing me--I am coming because I choose to come. I want my GED."

The self-confidence that Geneveve has acquired opened a whole new awareness for her. She now finds herself concerned about other people, their needs and wants. "It's hard for others who do not come from my background to understand how I got into this," [felony and probation]. It was like my life was on a line. I just fell on it and followed it." But her early successes in the program have encouraged her to

try for more. "It was like everything fell down around me. But now, I have things swept up, and I'll start stacking them up again when I get through here."

She believes her success is attributable to her changed attitude. She does not feel so isolated and hopeless, and she has begun to feel a sense of accomplishment. "I'm feeling good about being here. I now think that I may have a future to look forward to. I have set more goals in this program than I ever did before in my whole life. It excites me to think that I do matter."

Jack also has a more positive outlook about himself. Like Linda, he has also completed his GED in this program and has become a peer tutor. His attitude was affected most pointedly by the others in the class whom he saw as "successful." "Knowing that they could pass the test inspired me to believe that I could do it, too," he says.

Jesse has never contemplated success before. It seemed like something that happened to other people. But since coming to this program, he has acquired an attitude commensurate with achievement, partly because he is pushing himself and partly because he gets more help here than anywhere else. He still has a long road ahead to acquire true self-worth, but he believes that he will stick with the program. "It's changed my mind about a lot of things," he says. "I would never have considered taking classes or getting my GED if I wasn't here."

Both Peggy and Ken once thought of themselves as "dumb,"

but have gained confidence in their abilities. Peggy uses the word "drive" to describe her attitude and says that having people around her who are "positive" has made her "get my mind into it...accepting the challenge...wanting to get more education." Like Peggy, Ken says the program has increased his interest in the outside world, and he expresses pride in being able to discuss current events. He admits surprise at all that he has learned and says he now thinks he's worth something. "I just think I'm a better person," Ken says.

Although Wendy also learned an appreciation for the world and for "what is happening right here in this city that I didn't know about," more than anything else, she substantiates the belief that attitudes toward the program improve as scores improve. "I've been out of school for 23 years," she says, "and I was ashamed to come here. I didn't have a choice, though, so I tried to hide it. I really felt like a fool. I had lots of hang-ups about school, but I've lost those. Each time I test I want to do better. When I see my scores go up, I get real excited. I can sit down and hold a conversation with people now. I have confidence and more common sense. Once I lacked self-esteem, but now I have pride.

As is the case with attendance, the attitudes of the students are also affected by other people (significant others, who take pride in a loved one's accomplishments. Wendy's boyfriend fixes her breakfast so she can get to

school on time. Ken's mother received her GED and encourages him to "keep at it until he finishes." Rex has "an important person" in his life who supports his efforts and encourages him to get his GED. Karen lives with a sister who does not require room and board so that she can finish the program without having to get a job. Her boyfriend also encourages her. Geneveve has one sister who got her GED and went on to nursing school and one who went to college to become a teacher. They and Geneveve's mother all are interested in her accomplishments, and, she says, "I talk with them often, and they seem pleased about my coming here."

Cindy believes that there are three basic changes that have taken place within the PROVE students: changes in attitudes toward school, in self-image, and changes in the ability to make long-range goals. "Their newly acquired, positive perceptions of school will increase the likelihood of continuing their education further down the line," she says. "Self-esteem seems to build the hope, and the hope makes possible the ability to consider and plan for long-range goals. We've given them confidence to try and to dream and to make it."

Frequently, the respondents voiced a concern which correlates with Cindy's assessment of them as capable of making long-range plans and setting goals. That concern deals with the need for vocational training as a component of the PROVE PROJECT. For many of the people in this population, this is a new concern. Admittedly, most of them have lived

on a day-to-day basis and have been satisfied to deal with economic and vocational issues from an immature and perhaps a criminal point of view. Now, they would like to be able to plan and give organization to their lives.

The two peer tutors find themselves in an apprentice situation, which benefits both the program and the individuals. They are learning to deal with others in a social setting, developing leadership and interaction skills, as well as technical expertise. The sense of self-worth which they have acquired is evident and may be the most beneficial element of the experience. Both of them have already initiated the application process for college enrollment and Linda even has made arrangements for child care, four months in advance of college entrance.

Not all of these students can be tutors, but they could accumulate similar benefits. Carol says that for the first time in her life, she feels she can be educated. She would like to have a career in phlebotomy and is a good photographer. Beginning classes in either of these areas would help her, she says. Ken agrees. He, too, is interested in the medical field and wishes there were something here to help him focus on that goal. He has bought into the program and associates it with his success. He doesn't want to leave it when he gets his GED.

Jesse believes that if the program had vocational components, it would relieve him of the stress associated with the simultaneous responsibilities of job hunting and

going to school. Setting long-range goals is foreign to him, but Jesse says job training for the long term would interest him.

Carter says he wants more schooling after he completes his work here. I would be willing to stay in this program longer if it offered an opportunity to go into an apprenticeship. His interests are in woodworking, and he dreams of opening his own shop one day.

Karen says that she could learn about day care responsibilities if the program had such a component. She is interested in caring for both children and elderly people. Wendy is interested in word processing and other computer training. "I would like to be trained on anything like that," she says. "We need some of that training in this program."

Even the reading students, who are struggling to get into the GED classes, are looking beyond that to vocational possibilities. Geneveve says she used to think about suicide all the time because she could see no future. Now, though, she believes she might even go to community college. "But if this program has training, I would like for it to be in the field of medicine," she says. "Being an x-ray or lab technician sounds real good to me."

For these people, having a sense of direction extends further than taking skills tests. They have acquired a new-found strength: the ability to think past today.

Attitude-specific Recommendations

1. Because the self-esteem factor looms so large, and because the sense of accomplishment associated with improved test scores affects both attitude and self-esteem, we recommend several additional ways of assessment besides the formal recurring 5-week test. (a) Writing folders in which students' growth can be assessed informally; (b) peer-response groups during which other students can become part of the knowledge base; (c) class newsletters in which students are encouraged to write for an audience different from the teacher, and in which knowledge is generated about multicultural and multi-perspective experiences; (d) frequent personal evaluations with teachers so that students can express their changes in goals, attitudes, and beliefs, and so that teachers can help students to focus and clarify those goals.

2. Because of the attitudinal association with mental and physical health problems, it would help both the students and the program, itself, if there were more coordination with community resources and the project. We are not the experts in chemical abuse, chronic mental illness, or aberrant behavior. It is crucial that we realize that educational goals can only succeed if treatment, counseling, and job training are in place and operational as the primary foci of these students' lives.

3. We experienced such positive vibes and feedback from

those who were interviewed for this report, that we recommend an opportunity for all students to respond as participants in the program. This kind of client interaction will impact upon their attitudes and their performance and quite possibly upon their attendance. Repeatedly these respondents said, "No one has ever asked me what I thought before."

C. ACHIEVEMENT

Despite average or better intelligence, these respondents report histories of poor grades, poor attendance, and poor social skills. Their past behaviors reflect their impulsiveness and the lack of discipline in their lives. They tell of frequent fights, drug involvement, and trouble with the law, even as very young adolescents. There were no attempts at intervention, except on the part of a few sympathetic and understanding teachers.

Absolute answers are not available as to why some students become part of this "at risk population" when others in similar circumstances are able to overcome adversity and achieve both short and long-term goals. The variables cannot be sufficiently controlled for scientific proof, but most of the signs rather clearly point to the quality of parenting as the determinant (Peck, 1978).

Jesse says that he does not remember discussing the importance of education with his parents and does not know if either of them finished school. "I think they wanted me to go," he says, but they never told me to stay."

Ken, who was born when his mother was 14, does not know

who is father is, and says education was just not a top priority for his poor, widowed grandmother. When he dropped out of school, it was a relief for her, he thinks. He could go to work and help pay the bills.

Linda's mother went to the 11th grade, but her father never attended school at all. She was raised by a grandmother who could not read or write, and an aunt who left school when she was nine years old. "I never had much interest in school," Linda says. "I never thought I could do anything besides getting in trouble."

Like Jesse, Geneveve does not know whether her parents finished school, but she does know they had a lot to do with her dropping out. They were alcoholics. "I went to school," says Geneveve, "but I wasn't really there, if you know what I mean. I wasn't concentrating on school. I was thinking more about my parents and what I might find when I got home."

The majority of these students have brothers or sisters who have spent time in the corrections system. Two of them tell of the deaths of siblings associated with jailbreaks or lives of crime. All of the students report lives of desperation and sadness. Family ties were undone early, and support systems were nonexistent. Dominant characteristics include hostility, anger/resentment, and distrust, all of which can be attributed to physical, emotional, and educational deprivation. It is no wonder, then, that school achievement has been an unknown quantity in their lives until they became associated with this program.

What has made the difference?

Some say simply that maturity and the realization that they had to get their lives in order have helped them to focus on accomplishing this task. Others admit that having been forced to come here made them angry at first, but now seems like the best thing that has happened to them.

Reasons for achieving range from "having something important to do" to "the feelings of accomplishment" associated with taking the test. Specifically, they appreciate both the one-on-one instruction and the group discussions. Each of these activities lends an aura of individualized attention that most of these students never experienced in high school, except in terms of what they perceive as negative circumstances.

Several mentioned the security of the program, "where others are in the same situation and not looking down on us," as a positive aspect which leads to achievement. Many have formed friendships or at least positive relationships with other students and look forward to seeing them at school. As each one accomplishes a short-term goal, others see that the same possibilities await them.

Students see the computer lab as a factor in their achievement. Only one of the respondents mentioned the use of computers as a negative, saying that he felt uncomfortable and "like I'm wasting my time when I'm there." [in the lab] Others see lab time as a way of speeding up the process, and appreciate the immediate feedback they receive.

Mostly, these respondents associate their achievement with the newly acquired self-confidence and self-esteem, which are a result of having accomplished something significant. It is cyclic: achievement leads to self-assuredness leads to achievement. Helmstetter (1986) says that "research in the field of neuroscience suggests that such things as thoughts and attitudes play a far more important role in our chemistry than we ever thought possible" (p. 211). Negative self-thoughts seem to lower both student's motivation and achievement scores when a negative chemical dump occurs in the brain. Conversely, positive thoughts, ignited by the spark of self-belief, set off chemical/electrical triggers which heighten motivation and achievement.

Finally, it seems that these adult students, deprived and alienated in childhood, troubled and troubling adolescents, are beginning to acquire a self-definition which includes the word, "achiever."

PROVE

Program Recommendations

Meta Potts
Jean Tichenor

The PROVE PROJECT is an ambitious one. While the major focus is on the acquisition of the GED, it is the underlying premise that through this medium, the value systems and behaviors of these students will change, enabling them to become self-sufficient and contributing, law-abiding citizens. But characteristics are not changed easily. Those developed in a short time are not very stable (Bloom, 1956). Far-reaching changes in human characteristics are not achieved in a few months. Therefore, the major recommendations for this program involve suggestions that will allow the contact and interaction between ABE teachers and participant students to increase and spread over a longer period of time.

1. Hire a certified clinical psychologist. When the gifts of self-discipline, self-worth, and a degree of trust have not been acquired via childhood role models and parental behavior, the process of their acquisition is a complex struggle, often of lifelong duration and often unsuccessful. The students stand a better chance if they can meet regularly and often with a professional counselor to deal with their lack of control, their need for self-power, depression, and goal setting.

2. The teachers in the program should be provided with specialized staff development, which is focused on working with "at risk adults," particularly those with chronic emotional and mental illness, and with those whose value systems differ greatly from the staff.

3. The teachers should be trained in goal setting as a way of empowering the students. Educational plans for each students, similar to the Individual Educational Profile, should be a part of the student folders. Review often.

4. The program should be structured to include a Job-training component, incorporating the same goals and objectives as those in the WORTH program.

5. Pre-school child care is needed in the program (factor in number of enrollments).

6. Even though we recognize that these students lead complicated lives, their chances of success in the program and afterward increase as their attendance and participation increase. Therefore, we recommend compulsory attendance. (See section on attitudes)

7. The reporting forms (weekly parole & probation office report) is adequate only for quick review. It allows for attendance information by checking days and counting hours. Therefore, an improvement in reporting could be accomplished by concentration of specific observations and concerns made by the teachers which are to be written

in the "comment" section. As it stands, most of the comments refer again to attendance, and it seems to us redundant and not as helpful as more focused information.

8. Hire peer tutors immediately after taking GED test to eliminate lag time between taking the tests and getting their results.

9. Provide opportunity for students to respond to participation in program at regular intervals.

10. As mentioned earlier in this report, the "significant other" in the lives of these students is a crucial factor in student success. It is well known and documented that those who are directly affected by a change in life style are often responsible for sabotaging the efforts of the student, even though they initially supported the attempt. Therefore, we recommend a concentrated effort to involve those important people in the program. Allow them to visit, hold follow-up meetings to fill them in on progress and promise.

Finally, we have observed the multiple-parallels between the PROJECT PROVE and the WORTH PROJECT students. It seems to us to be a duplication of services to separate these programs. They could be combined, served by one Executive Director or Coordinator who should be helped by part time coordinators. All students in these two programs would then benefit from the many services provided to the WORTH students.

PROVE PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

From Instructors in the Program:

Cindy Rodosky, Coordinator;
Jacqui Remington and Dene Bannister, Instructors

1. The changes in the PROVE participants which have occurred this year, as individuals or as a group, which I think are most important are:

   Improved self-esteem (self-image); attitudes toward school; and changes in ability to make long-range goals. The feelings of accomplishment have led to growth in other areas. They have begun to believe in themselves and in their abilities. They are building on success.

   These students have been given directions and orders for so long that they do not know they their own strengths concerning decision-making. They have begun to make progress in making choices and to have confidence in their decision. Some are showing good decision-making skills, deciding to make some life-style changes or simply deciding to do some things that they have not done before. Our use of critical thinking skills in the classroom has given them a chance to apply decision-making skills to their everyday lives.

   Factors which contribute to student growth are the one-to-one assistance and small group work, which affords student the opportunity to talk through problems whether they are school-related or life-related; the non-threatening class atmosphere and teaching styles.

   Changes in self-esteem seemed to build hopes that enable students to set goals and make plans, something which has not been a part of their lives to this point. They have confidence to try.

   Changes in their own self-image have enabled these students to think about someone other than themselves. Most of them have been pretty self-centered in the past.

2. The things for the participants which we have done this year in the program that seem to have been most successful are:

   Affording the students an opportunity to build friendships and develop camaraderies has resulted in more successful small group work. Students are saying more about a variety of topics, willing to state opinions, and learning to value others' opinions.

Modeling value and belief systems that students emulate. Providing students the opportunity to work with each other in small groups. They learn to share ideas to have respect for others. They learn give and take.

Using peer tutors has helped from both sides. The students have benefitted, and so have the tutors.

The visit to Bob Rosenthal was a very good "arts" experience. We turned it into a writing assignment, as well.

We have been able to take advantage of opportunities to expound on the lesson at hand. We have learned to "go with the flow". Active learning and variety are crucial.

Having the Coordinator at the school full time enables her to get to know the students and deal with events and situations more quickly and more effectively.

3. The things about the program which seem to be the most problematic for the participants are:

Several have problems with child care. Even though transportation is provided, it is a long trip for many.

Most of the students have multiple obligations to meet, and they find it hard to organize their time to meet these commitments. They are not assertive enough to ask people in the system to arrange schedules to meet the time frame of the school day.

Students lead crisis-oriented lives. They are governed by these crises events, which may range from a cold to a beating to loss of housing.

Some are affected by their knowledge that the GED will not open many doors to career opportunities.

Some are on medication for depression, which causes them to be too "chemically suppressed." They either go to sleep or are too groggy to work.

Attendance is affected by student's lack of money to buy breakfast in some cases. We have coffee here, but students must pay. I would like to have free coffee and hot chocolate available for them. It would benefit the teachers as well as the students because they might be more alert.

Materials on hand are not adequate to help the low-level reading students. We need tapes for them to hear while

they are reading. Good adult-interest materials are too few.

5. If I were talking with the people in the agencies funding our program, the accomplishments which have occurred this this year that I think are most important to tell them are:

   The percentage of our students who take the GED and pass. The stories of students who move from the reading class to the GED class.

   The changed attitudes toward education that have occurred. The benefits go beyond these students and into the next generation.

   The changes in personality among the participants. They have lived in a mean world and have learned to care only about themselves or about a very limited number of people. Now, they are talking about their concerns for others and trying to do what they can to help others in the program.

6. If I were talking with staff who were planning a new project to begin next year, the problems that we have faced this year that I think most important for them to know are:

   The officers are not consistent. Some support a lot--some not at all. Keep in mind what they have to do with the clients, too. Keep the process simple and clear for the officers. Keep a high profile.

   The students live complex lives and lack the ability to organize the chaos. They need help in coordinating their success.

   Consider a separate class for 5.0--7.5 grade level in reading.

   Computer space is limited, especially when the Center students are also working in the lab.

7. During this year, the problem solutions that I think have been most important to the overall achievement of the program are:
   A concise, yet flexible system of referral.
   Peer tutors.
   Open House for parole officers.
   Coordinator at the site full time.

8. The changes in our program which I think should be made to make it better next year are:

Create a separate class for 5.0-7.5 students.
Consider more than one daytime and nighttime site.
Provide child care.
Allow the coordinator to teach one of the classes.
Create incentive programs to increase attendance.
More support from the corrections system--officers and judges.
Improve materials. Consumable materials would really help the lower ability students.
Broaden the context of the program beyond the acquisition of the GED. Include job training and life-skills training. More exposure to the arts and culture in the city. We need to expand the horizons of these people.